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From American Consulate Medan # 29, 2006

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SUBJECT: ACEH PEACE PROCESS MOVING FORWARD, HEADING TOWARD
ELECTIONS WITH GAM PARTICIPATION

REF: (A) Jakarta 10572

(B) Jakarta 08734
(C) Jakarta 04811
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Summary

1. The Aceh peace process continues to move forward. Elections have been scheduled for December 11, and work has begun on implementing the Law on Governance of Aceh (LOGA). The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) is winding down its work and expects to cease operation on December 15. Reintegration payments to former combatants have been halted over the Free Aceh Movement's (GAM) reluctance to provide names of recipients. However, GAM is actively campaigning for the December elections and is represented in two separate gubernatorial tickets. Embassy Jakarta plans to provide election observers. End Summary.

Moving Forward

2. Consulate and Embassy officers visited Aceh on October 11-12 to assess the political situation as the province, which is recovering from a long civil war and the 2004 tsunami, prepares for its first local elections in decades. Following the Indonesian Parliament's passage of the Law on the Governance of Aceh (LOGA), as provided in the August 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) ending hostilities between GAM and the GOI, the peace process has moved into a new phase (ref A). Elections for Governor and for Regent (administrative head) in Aceh's 18 districts are scheduled for December 11, GAM candidates are actively campaigning for the election, and a Joint Forum (FORBES) with membership from GOI, GAM, and the Indonesian military (TNI) has started to discuss implementation of the LOGA.

AMM Completes Its Work

3. The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), whose mandate was extended to December 15, will have no role in election, but the European Union is planning to send up to 80 observers to Aceh for the election. AMM Principal Deputy Head of Mission, Malaysian Major General Mohammad Rozzi bin Baharom,

told us that the AMM would not engage in the election campaign unless it saw evidence of discrimination against GAM candidates. AMM political advisor Rochelle Cohen noted the AMM was already winding down its mission in Aceh and confirmed that its work, which had been focused on the implementation of the MOU, would formally end on December 15. All disputed prisoner cases had been resolved by August 15, she said, and TNI and police forces were within the MOU-required numbers. The 14,000 troops and 9,100 police remaining in Aceh were all "organic" (permanently stationed there) and the TNI was engaged in rebuilding, reconstruction and repositioning of its forces around Aceh in accordance with its new emphasis on external defense.

GAM Election Rivalry Sharpens

14. Publicly, GAM representatives have said nothing to challenge or discourage its former adherents from participating in the upcoming elections. Our discussions with GAM rank and file during our visit underscored they will not fully sign on to the political process until they see concrete results in self-governance. However, GAM's direct affiliation with two separate gubernatorial-vicegubernatorial candidacies underscores its decision to participate seriously in the elections. One ticket is led by Humam Hamid, a member of the Pancasila Patriot Party. Hamid is not a former GAM member, but his running mate, Hasbi Abdullah, is a former political prisoner and the brother of Zaini Abdullah, a GAM leader still in Sweden. (The Pancasila Patriot Party is a small national party which did not win any seats in the national legislature in 2004.) Hamid claims to have the endorsement of Malik Mahmoud, the senior GAM leader in Sweden, and told us Mahmoud believed it was too early for an ex-GAM governor and had therefore opted to support a "peace coalition" by partnering with an established party. The other GAM ticket is led by former Aceh GAM leader Irwandi Yusuf (known overwhelmingly by his first name, Irwandi), who is running as an independent candidate and is paired with another independent, Muhammad Nazar, a former political prisoner who is not associated with GAM. Irwandi is running as an independent because the MOU requires that GAM dissolve itself as part of the transition.

15. Although neither of the two tickets has an explicit GAM identity, Hamid's apparent endorsement by the expatriate GAM leadership and Irwandi's transparent identity as a former GAM leader make clear the extent of GAM involvement in the election campaign. Already considerable rivalry has emerged between the two gubernatorial candidates, indicating a possible split within the GAM over election strategies. Irwandi must still assemble the required number of signatures to qualify as an official candidate, but other steps he has taken in the run-up to the official campaign season confirm his intentions. In line with election regulations require that candidates not hold political office, Irwandi has announced his resignation as the GAM's representative to the AMM, the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA) and the Joint Forum (FORBES).

Reintegration Funds Halted

16. Under the terms of the Helsinki MOU, BRA has responsibility to support the reintegration of former GAM combatants into Acehese society. BRA Economic Bureau chief Islahuddin told us the BRA works with the Subregency Development Program (i.e., at the county level) to implement this reintegration program. He explained the allotment of funds to villages was based on village size and past level of impact of the insurgency on that village. However, BRA had not been able to fully distribute payments to former rebels nor provide them with needed training. The national government had allocated a total of \$60 million through 2006 and another \$70 million in 2007 for integration. Only \$12.5 million of that had been released, however, largely because GAM had not provided the names of intended recipients. As

had been the case with IOM's 2005 emergency payments to former GAM (ref D), Islahuddin noted, GAM refusal had forced BRA to halt payments because of the BRA's accountability requirements. Islahuddin said he could not proceed further on this basis without explicit authorization from Jakarta.

LOGA Implementation

17. Describing the 20-member FORBES -- charged with implementing the LOGA -- as ineffective, Wiratmadinata, Deputy Director of Aceh NGO Forum, complained board members had no time because they were busy campaigning for candidates in the upcoming elections. He asserted Usman Hassan, FORBES chairman, had never attended a meeting in three months. Wiratmadinata believed it would take years to complete the 90-plus regulations needed to implement the LOGA. USAID-funded Advisor to the Governor Leroy Hollenbeck, however, argued the regulations could be forthcoming reasonably soon from the provincial assembly, which had formed multiple committees to accelerate work on the regulations. Hollenbeck also noted USAID had hired a consultant for FORBES, which should enhance FORBES' effectiveness.

Comment

18. In addition to the two GAM-affiliated gubernatorial tickets, several other clearly identifiable GAM campaigns (all as independents) at the district level, confirm GAM is moving squarely into the political arena in Aceh. GAM's participation in the election process bodes well for political reintegration of former combatants and its followers and for continued peace in Aceh. AMM's downsizing and eventual departure soon after the elections (and long before a second round) is a further sign MOU implementation is on track. A successful election on December 11, with the imprimatur of local monitors and international observers, will anchor that perception. Embassy and Consulate intend to contribute a team of election observers to help ensure this result.

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